U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HEARING

The Benefits and Challenges of Producing Liquid Fuel from Coal: The Role for Federal Research

September 4, 2007

Statement of Subcommittee on Energy & Environment Ranking Member Bob Inglis (SC-4)

This afternoon, Coca-Cola and the United Resource Recovery Corporation will be announcing their intent to build, in Spartanburg, South Carolina, the largest bottle-to-bottle recycling plant in the world. The plant will recycle 100 million pounds of plastic for reuse each year – enough plastic to make 2 billion 20-ounce Coca-Cola bottles. The plant will bring jobs to the district, require less energy than producing bottles from unused materials, reduce waste, and lessen carbon dioxide emissions by 1 million metric tons over the next 10 years.

It wasn't that long ago when the best way we knew how to deal with waste was to dig a hole and bury it. When we found out that that strategy wasn't the best use of resources, nor environmentally sound, we innovated and started recycling.

I suppose that when we first started realizing the negative effects of burying our plastic, someone could have, and may have, suggested that we just bury the waste in a different place – maybe at the bottom of the ocean. In retrospect, it's easy to see that that approach, while newer looking, was equally problematic.

So, plastics are everywhere, and we learned how to innovate around that reality. In the same way, coal is a fact of life in our current energy situation, and we have an opportunity to innovate the most efficient uses of that resource.

Coal's a lot like those plastics. At one point, we thought burning it in kettle-stoves was a good way to heat a home. Now, the challenges of carbon emissions and greenhouse gases cause us to re-think that strategy.

I'm concerned that we may be headed down the wrong track here in gasifying coal for transportation use. Instead of finding a different way to burn coal out of a different pipe (car exhaust instead of a factory smokestack), there's an opportunity to chart a new path. By encouraging Integrated Gasification Combined Cycle (IGCC) technology, we can reduce our dependence on foreign oil by utilizing our coal resource. We can address climate concerns by capturing and sequestering nearly all of the carbon emissions. Finally, from that coal, we can produce clean energy - electricity and hydrogen that can fuel plug-in and hydrogen-powered vehicles.

Before we knew any better, we could talk energy without talking about climate. We no longer have that luxury. I hope that the coal developments we encourage take both into account, and support the American innovative spirit in creating a new energy economy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.